

Hibernian Supporters Panel
Meeting Minutes Wednesday 21st May 2025

Present:

From the Club: Ian Gordon, Director and Principal Shareholder; Adam Tomlinson, Communications Director; Kieran Power, Supporter Liaison Officer and Steve Hazlett, Venue and Operations Director

Representatives from the following supporters' organisations: Hibernian Supporters Association; Hibeas Bounce, Hibs.net, HibeasPride, Block 7, Hibs Supporters Group, Hibernian Supporters Ltd and Hibernian Women Supporters Alliance

Plus, our seven representatives from the fans. (Details of all attendees can be found [here](#))

Agenda

Welcome; Club Strategy; HTC, European campaign; Ticketing; Match Operations; Catering; 150th Celebrations; Club Shop.

Welcome – On behalf of the club Adam warmly welcomed all and reiterated that he hoped that these meetings would be as open and transparent as possible with the agendas being set by both the club and fans alike. Kieran introduced the above agenda.

Club Strategy - Ian provided a comprehensive overview that fell under three initiatives: ***Persevere, Progress; Prosper.***

- ***Persevere - Focussing on strengthening the things that we're doing right***

Recognised that the fans are the heartbeat of this club, moments like Celtic and Hearts at home, and the last home game of the season showcase what a great fanbase we have and perhaps the club haven't done that as well as they should've over the last few years.

Club Controlled Finances – An area that we believe we've done very well with YoY growth and our goal is to continue this going forward. On Black Knights the last 10 months has been positive but especially since Tim came in, it improves every day and we're in a really good spot as we have shared ambitions and end goals.

Easter Road Infrastructure – As we all know Ron was big on hospitality and investing in the stadium, we believe that's now been completed. We're really now seeing a massive benefit in the Behind the Goals area and this is a space of future non-match day revenue.

- ***Progress – Areas of improvement***

Our footballing strategy is now much improved with a uniform standard applied across all operations. Player recruitment prioritises player character to ensure that we sign players who will add value on and off the pitch and this has shown throughout this season.

The HTC development is needed as both the women's and under 19s teams are now full time – the facility is really stretched at the moment. A land swap deal has been completed and this allows us to get land closer to the current site and it's also ready to be built upon.

Fan engagement – this is an area that we've not been good enough at and this is a good reason why we're sitting here tonight, and we want that to continue to have and keep the fans more engaged on our strategy and what we're doing to move the club forward.

Financially the last set of accounts didn't make for great reading and there's no hiding away from that. We still need to dig a little bit more to reduce the wages: turnover, boost ST sales (broken ST sales record and it's still going up quite significantly) continue to trade at a £1m playing trading surplus pa. We believe that the strategy with Black Knights can get us to a different level and type of players required can allow us to really build in this area of player trading

- ***Prosper – What success looks like for us***

A lot of this was stuff that Ron put in place at his first AGM six years ago. Highlighted that a club like Hibs need to be winning cups on a more regular basis, qualifying for Euro Group stages was Ron's ultimate goal, improve financial performance and the new Senior Leadership Team created eight months ago will protect us going forward and provide more accountability.

Additionally, we seek to improve engagement with our supporters, our home and our community. A specific area of focus is the Hibernian Community Foundation, we're working very hard to reset the Foundation with a new mission statement and purpose.

New CEO

A very comprehensive recruitment programme was headed by Ian and Tim Bezbatchenko with over 75 interviews and over several months. This was whittled down to 10, then 5 and then 2. The person will be announced at some point in the near future.

HTC Development – Ian provided a comprehensive overview of the proposed re-development and shared architect drawings. Planning is at an advanced stage and will be presented to SFA fairly soon. The development working group included all Heads of Departments – the Football Department was fully embedded in all discussions. Substantial grants may be available from the SFA, and work is expected to begin in 2026.

For the men's first team – a new building designed using an open concept plus 2 new hybrid pitches for exclusive use. The construction will include raised banks to reduce the wind factor'. For the women's team – a whole section of the current facility that will be upgraded.

There will be a new indoor facility housing a full-sized synthetic pitch to UEFA Championship Standard along with seating plus a coffee area and viewing facilities for parents accompanying their children who attend the academy. This facility will be made available for community use.

Two new seven aside pitches enclosed by cages that will also be made available for community and academy use and be floodlit to maximise the usage.

There will also be satellite academy facilities. One nearing completion is in Hamilton, which is a very central Scottish location within easy travelling distance from a large pool of potential talent. The second satellite academy will be to the west of Edinburgh. Malky is overseeing these projects.

Other improvements will be made to car parking facilities at HTC.

European campaign

A UEFA requirement is that a Category 4 stadium is required for group stage games. Ours is currently Category 3 but upgrading work in the tunnel, referee changing room, away dressing room, media flash rooms and stadium lighting is being completed to meet Grade 4 standards. All will be complete before our next European game. The significant investment was already made to upgrade the floodlights last season.

The club will consider Euro Game match bundles if it reaches the League Phase, this might include the women's and under 18's games. The club is also considering providing travel packages to the away games– comprising of flights, hotels and match tickets - if we reach the group stages. This could be difficult for the earlier stages due to time constraints. Euro away fans must be allocated 5% of stadium tickets, this is managed on a game-by-game basis.

For home games, should we draw a team with a large fan base, they will be given 1000 tickets as we hope that the South Stand will be accommodating Hibs fans. 200 VIP tickets also must be made available.

Stevie Hazlett commented on that we need to ensure that “we're in it to win it”, and therefore if the woman's team wished to play on astro rather than the grass at ER then the club will accommodate the wishes of Grant and his team.

Ticketing

The Club is open to a loyalty points scheme albeit this can be difficult as some SPFL clubs sell tickets directly to away fans. This would make it difficult to award points for those purchases.

Steven Brockie advised that the previous Direct Debit for the Hibs First programme worked well but now it was £50 to simply guarantee a ticket. The club acknowledged this could be abused but also had to consider personal circumstances of each supporter at any given time. Steve Hazlett was open to any other suggestions.

Problems arising from fans encroaching onto the disabled fans' platforms were discussed, hopefully the presence of members of the Disability Liaison Team will manage access better to address these matters.

Match Operations

Steve Hazlett addressed the current hot topics.

Segregation barriers outside the ground – Whilst City of Edinburgh Council is very co-operative its policy is not to hold back fans/public in any stadium if at all possible. Also, as the South Stand has excellent egress provision it would need a very high level of stewarding and policing to ensure that away fans were actually held back within the stadium. This would be very expensive and difficult to manage.

The police and council ultimately determine how best to channel fans departing the stadium and, although it's not ideal, the current provisions are believed to be best at present.

The club continues to meet with the council / police to assess risk and address ingress/ egress safety flash points. Innovative approaches have been considered, e.g. use of Network Rail land, but so far have not proven to be appropriate.

Ideally ticket sales to away fans would be minimal however numbers do not currently warrant this – one consideration being the loss of revenue when segregating the South Stand. The club have also sent CCTV to other member clubs showing inappropriate behaviour in the away stand but the response from them has been disappointing.

Problems with the flow of fans within the East Stand and the difficulty this presents to disabled fans were highlighted. Steve will look into this and attempt to find a working solution. The matter of some fans abusing the disabled toilet facilities will also be addressed.

Currently fans under the age of 13 must be accompanied by a guardian when attending matches. Fans between the ages of 13 and 16 are, legally, still children and the club have a specific duty of care for their wellbeing and safety. Steve advised that he expected them to carry a Young Scot card to allow them unaccompanied entry as this provide the club with emergency contact details should this be necessary. The club fully welcomes fans in this age group as these are the future!

Gibby asked questions on TIFOs / Displays / Surfing Displays – the Club welcomed such displays was looking into options to help display these, e.g. pulleys. Steve suggested that perhaps other supporter groups could organise other displays / TIFOs etc in the East / West stands as TIFOs greatly enhance the match day experience and atmosphere. It was acknowledged that there was a serious risk regarding pyros, especially if these came into contact with surfing banners. Steve hoped that the pyro risk had been considerably reduced, noting that most pyros appeared to be carried into the ground by fans under the age of 16, which presented its own difficulty. All TIFOS etc had to be fully fire retardant.

Stevie Hazlet also mentioned that himself and his team being visual in and around our away games had raised the standards of other clubs on how they treat Hibs fans.

Catering

The club will discuss the management of kiosks, pricing, quality and queue management with Elior, the catering partner. The lack of sugarless drinks for children was one particular concern but overall quality and choice was also highlighted.

The club have a meeting with Elior in the coming weeks as they are aware of the catering being a concern from fans.

The difficulty for disabled access to kiosks was also discussed. Steve advised that a trial to deliver food/drinks to the disabled platforms had been carried out and this will be continued. These orders could be made using an App. More publicity will be provided about this service.

150th Celebrations

The 150th Celebration Working Group would start making more announcements shortly. The club thought that the activities planned throughout the 2025/26 season were excellent and covered all

age groups and groups of fans. The announcements will be made in a phased approach so the excitement should be sustained over the year.

The new kit was briefly discussed but no actual details were released, we have to be patient. The club is one of four elite clubs serviced by Joma so we will be receiving bespoke strips that will be available for both men and women.

Adam T was really excited about the legacy that the 150th celebrations could have on future generations via the school engagement programme, enticing new blood and increasing the fanbase.

Shop

Problems covering items available in the shop were discussed. It was noted that no items under £10 were available, neither were gift vouchers or stocking fillers". Items purchased on-line could not be returned via the store and, overall, choice was limited e.g., a limited leisure wear range. All these issues will be discussed with Fanatics, the shop operator.

Volunteers

The Club invited any fan with a little time on their hands to come along to help freshen up the stadium. This provided an opportunity for additional fan engagement and community building.

Adam will prepare some communications round this.

Sponsorship of goal posts

Steve advised that the club needed to purchase new goal posts to comply with UEFA standards for the European games. He asked if any supporter group would like to sponsor these at £5,000.

The club was always happy to engage with groups to discuss any sponsorship opportunities. The club is happy to purchase them; they just wanted to give supporter groups an extra opportunity to be involved in European fixtures.

Sir Tom Farmer RIP – Funeral arrangements

Sir Tom's funeral will take place on Wednesday 28th May and the Club and supporters will be represented.

Closing remarks

Adam thanked everyone for attending and thought that this had been a very good inaugural session. Minutes would be on the website as soon as possible and a date would be arranged for the next meeting shortly.

Minutes prepared by Hibernian Supporters Ltd